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# Nourishing our souls

Pat Fitzpatrick CSSp

A group of tourists were on safari in Africa. They had hired several local porters to carry their supplies while they trekked. After three days, the porters told them they would have to stop and rest for a day. They were not tired, they explained, but “we have walked too far too fast and now we must wait for our souls to catch up to us.” (Quoted in *The Lord is my Shepherd*, Harold Kushner)

What did he say at Mass this morning? What’s he up to this week? Who’s he meeting today? Where’s he going? Why’s he quoted so much? When’s he going to take a break?

Pope Francis is seldom out of the news. There’s something fascinating about him. He’s different. He’s in touch with the world — with young and old, rich and poor, elderly and teenagers, politicians and footballers. He makes phone calls. He stays in touch.

On the evening before his inauguration, he called his old friend, Rabbi Abraham Skorka, in Buenos Aires: “Hello, it’s Bergoglio. They trapped me here in Rome and they won’t let me come home.”

Trapped — perhaps. But if he must stay put, he is certainly making the most of his “captivity.” Reaching out, building bridges, keeping in touch.

Pope Francis is undoubtedly the most quotable of Popes, the most down to earth. Never have simple sentences said so much:

- The Gospel is good news — there is no time for melancholy Christians whose faces have more in common with pickled peppers than joy.
- A church that doesn’t get out sooner or later gets sick from being locked up.
- Religious should be men and women who are able to wake up the world.
- What does the Lord wish to say by sending us vocations from the youngest churches? I don’t know. But I ask myself the question. We have to ask it. The Lord’s will is somehow in all this.

- Life is complicated; it consists of grace and sin. Whoever does not sin is not human. We all make mistakes and we need to recognize our weaknesses.
- We must form hearts in our seminaries. Otherwise we are creating little monsters. And these little monsters mold the people of God. This really gives me goose bumps.
- Wake up the world! Be witnesses of a different way of doing things, of acting, of living! It is possible to live differently in this world.
- Community conflicts are inevitable: in a certain sense they need to happen if the community is truly living sincere and honest relationships. That’s life. Something is missing from communities where there is no conflict. Reality brings conflicts — in all families and all groups of people. And conflict must be faced head on: it should not be ignored. Covering it over just creates a pressure cooker that will eventually explode. A life without conflicts is not life.
- How good it feels to come back to God whenever we are lost! Let me say this once more: God never tires of forgiving us; we are the ones who tire of seeking his mercy.
- The Eucharist, although it is the fullness of sacramental life, is not a prize for the perfect but a powerful medicine and nourishment for the weak.
- Sometimes we are tempted to be that kind of Christian who keeps the Lord’s wounds at arm’s length. Yet Jesus wants us to touch human misery, to touch the suffering flesh of others.

A thoughtful, reflective read of what Pope Francis has said and written gives our souls a chance to catch up to us too. ■